

Saskatchewan HISTORY

★ DUST GETS
IN YOUR EYES

BY

GEO. W. SIMPSON

★ RECENT
CANADIAN
HISTORIES

REVIEWED BY

W. R. GRAHAM



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Saskatchewan History

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Foreword

No magazine with this title should need an introduction to the people of Saskatchewan who, after much poetic concentration on the future, are suddenly realizing that they have a past, and that the past is important too. Much Saskatchewan history is now being written and published in scattered books and periodicals; more would appear if those able and ready to write had some encouragement.

SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY is designed to give information and encouragement—information about what some are doing, and encouragement to them and others to do much more. Space will be given to reviews and notices of all publications on provincial history and related subjects. We hope also to offer new material of various kinds: from the pioneer who tells not what he has read, but what he has lived—the primary historian; from writers who will gather up from little known books important, but rather inaccessible material; and from students who, in increasing numbers, are exploring our archives and fitting together from disjointed fragments the real story of our rather legendary past.

Comments and suggestions for future issues will be welcomed. This new venture depends for its success on those people of Saskatchewan, living here at home, or scattered over the continent, who feel that our province has too long been represented on the historical map by distinguished but lonely pioneers.

H. N.

Dust Gets in Your Eyes

THIS magazine is established to promote the study, the reading, and the writing of Saskatchewan history. In this, its first number, one may well ask whether Saskatchewan has a history worth writing or reading, to what extent it has been already written, and in what fields there still remains abundant opportunity for interesting study, fascinating narrative and illuminating explanation.

There is no doubt that Saskatchewan has a history full of the stuff that makes life dynamic, dramatic and challenging. In less than three centuries the area included in this province has passed through all the major phases of material culture, from stone tools to industrialized agriculture. In less than half a century it has been transformed from a trading colony to a self-governing province. In less than three decades the greater portion of its habitable areas was covered with homesteads, railways, roads, towns, villages, churches and schools. Here is a story worthy of remembrance and on a sufficiently high level of human endeavour and achievement to be called history. Indeed no one who has experienced or observed this historical process in any considerable part can escape its fascination.

The impulse to write this story of Saskatchewan in whole, or in part, has already resulted in a number of books, studies, articles and sketches. Some of these take in the wider area of the entire prairie region. In this brief article mention will be made only of a few of the main books which deal most directly with Saskatchewan history. In subsequent articles fuller treatment will be given to special phases of our history.

We have not as yet a good provincial history which does justice to the broad stream of social and political development. History writers are generally open to the charge of some bias, partiality, limitation or omission. In turning over and cultivating the deep earth of the past almost inevitably "Dust Gets In Your Eyes." In Saskatchewan, dust has been a vexation to the spirit and an irritation to the eyes but cultivation proceeds. In a literal sense, because of deep earth and in spite of dust, Saskatchewan has poured its wealth into the general stream of Canadian economy. In a figurative sense, a parallel wealth of history is inherent in the past life, experiences and organizations of the Saskatchewan people.

The first chapter in Saskatchewan history should be on the Stone Age. The evidence in abundance has been uncovered by the winds and turned up by the ploughshare. In places in Saskatchewan small boys of all ages have collected flints as boys elsewhere collect birds' eggs. Here and there more elaborate collecting has been undertaken. There is still lacking however a thorough and systematic archeological study. Orchard's book, *The Stone Age in Saskatchewan*¹ gives some interesting information. The classifications however are covered with a sort of French dust which provokes controversy.

A second chapter in Saskatchewan history might well deal with Indian culture. Such a study would combine anthropology with history. A great deal of study and writing still requires to be done before a final appraisal of Indian

1.—For this and other books referred to in this article, see page 20.

culture is possible. A brief historical study has been made of the Sioux Indians by the Rev. G. Laviolette.

The history of the Fur Trade, including exploration and discovery might well constitute a third section of Saskatchewan history. Here the field of writing which has already been cultivated broadens out. The dust raised also becomes thicker. Of all the works the most complete account appears in A. S. Morton's *History of the Canadian West*.

In 1870 the region of Saskatchewan along with other areas came under the direct government of the Dominion of Canada. The setting up of territorial government and the adjustment of new modes of economic and social life to the old ways of living constitutes a lively story: Stanley's study, *The Birth of Western Canada* places the story in its broad setting, while Lingard's *Territorial Government in Canada* is documented but not exactly lively. Oliver's *The Canadian North-West* gives the documents without the story. Cameron's *On the Trail of Big Bear* is a good example of the type of monograph which gives color and blood to general history.

The creation of the Province in 1905 took place in the very midst of the phenomenal tide of settlement which finally transformed the Saskatchewan community. This story is told in broad and stiff outline in Morton and Martin's, *History of Prairie Settlement*. Other books have dealt with particular subjects But none of these books begins to exhaust the rich and variegated life characterizing this period of provincial history. Dozens of books are needed on all phases of institutional and local history before we can fully appreciate the multiplicity of affairs which operate in society. The churches, for example, have a vital story to tell. This is indicated but not fully set forth in a book like Strang's *History of Missions in Southern Saskatchewan*.

It is particularly desirable that individuals who have had the opportunity of first hand observation or experience should compile accounts, assemble information and write reminiscences. Mr. John Hawkes, one-time legislative librarian, left such a legacy in a three-volume history of Saskatchewan while Mr. Norman F. Black, a prominent educationist, compiled a two-volume work. Both books are full of biographical and other basic material for history.

One of the special features of Saskatchewan society is the varied ethnic composition of the population. Only slightly more than half our people are of British origin. The story of the other European peoples, their traditions, their coming to Canada, their settlement and their adjustment is a thrilling tale which is only beginning to be written. Studies like Dawson's on group settlement might well be extended but with more of the human interest added to statistical detail. Indeed this Saskatchewan adventure of ethnic mixture and of co-operation in citizenship may well be our chief contribution to a world so sadly torn by implacable group hates and rivalries.

Thus while some pioneer historians have already broken the Saskatchewan ground there are still wide spaces to be cultivated. May the work go on. Let the dust blow if it must, even though some of it gets in your eyes.

GEORGE W. SIMPSON

DOCUMENTS

The Search for Water on the Canadian Plains

THE SCARCITY of water and timber on the Great Plains of North America endowed pioneering here with a type of risk and uncertainty unique in the history of the frontier on this continent. In the east, it has been said, civilization stood on three legs—land, water, and timber; on the Great Plains two of these legs were withdrawn, and civilization was left to stand on one leg—land.¹ In their search for water, the pioneers soon discovered that in many parts of the region an underground supply could not be secured by the shallow dug well so familiar in the east. In this new land the water bearing strata lay at a depth which made the digging of a well an intolerable effort unless prior boring with a “test auger” had guaranteed the presence of an adequate supply. Moreover these strata were frequently found below the level which could be reached by a dug well, necessitating well drilling. But both testing and drilling required mechanical equipment beyond the means of most of the pioneers.

The documents presented below show how the difficulty of securing test augers was solved on the Canadian plains. Here the Territorial Government in 1888 undertook to provide augers for making tests in different districts, and this marked the beginning of what soon became an extensive public program of water supply development, which ultimately included well drilling, public pumps, construction of reservoirs, and bonuses to private operators of well drilling outfits.² The maintenance of test augers was continued by the provincial Department of Public Works until 1911-12, when they were transferred to the custody of the various municipalities in which they were located.

LEWIS H. THOMAS

Round Plain,
Touchwood Hills,
Oct. 15th '88.³

To the Hon. E. Dewdney,
Minister of the Interior,
Ottawa.

Sir,

We the undersigned petitioners being settlers of the Round Plain in the Touchwood Hills in the Eastern district of Assiniboia most respectfully request that you will be pleased to send to this district a well boring auger for the purpose of testing and boring for water, for the benefit of the settlers who have experienced

1. W. P. WEBB, *The Great Plains* (Boston, etc., 1931), p.9.

2. For details of this program see the *Annual Reports* of the Department of Public Works of the North-West Territories and the Province of Saskatchewan.

3. This petition and the two documents which follow it are from Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file No. 189659 (transcripts in Archives Office, University of Saskatchewan, and Archives Division, Legislative Library). The petition was accompanied by a covering letter from Mr. Wm. Sutherland, M.L.A. (North Qu'Appelle) urging early action on the matter. It was signed by the following men, most of whom were farmers: Charles Perry, J. Muirhead, W. A. Meutack, James Hall, Jr., Michael Hall, James Hall, A. W. Beath, R. T. Kipsock, G. Cork, John Bockette, John Greenlay, Gavan Strang, Wm. Anderson, Walter Fee, P. J. Hamilton, N. Thibault, T. McInnes, Wm. Norris, R. McAulay, Thomas Brown, J. Milligan, Joshua Milligan, Jr., Henry Milligan, John H. Aitkins, Geo. Fee.

great trouble and difficulty in obtaining sufficient water for their stock. This being a district especially adapted for stock raising, except for the scarcity of water, this is a want which materially affects this district and the country generally.

We would most respectfully call your attention to the necessity of having this matter attended to at the earliest possible moment as some settlers have already left this plain and others will follow unless something is done.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

[copy]

Ottawa, 29th Oct., 1888.

Sir,

I am directed by the Minister of the Interior to state, for the information of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Territories, that the Department of the Interior owns two well-boring machines, which were purchased by the Department to enable settlers in districts where water is scarce to sink test wells, the cost of such machines being beyond the means of the average settler; but the Minister is of opinion that this is more particularly a local work, and that the time has now arrived when the Government of the North West Territories should assume it. He therefore instructs me to offer these well-borers to the Government of the Territories if they are willing to assume their management. I am further to say that in the event of this transfer being arranged, a reasonable amount to cover the cost of management might be placed in the estimates for the North West Government for the ensuing year.

R. B. Gordon, Esq.,
Secretary to the
Lieut. Governor
of the North
West Territories,
Regina, N.W.T.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
JOHN R. HALL
Acting D[eputy] M[inister] I[nterior]

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

[endorsed] 189659

Regina 20th November, 1888.

No. 3042

Sir,

I am directed by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th ultimo, in which the Minister offers for the acceptance of the North West Government two Well Borers owned by the Department and which were purchased for the purpose of enabling Settlers in Districts where Water is scarce to sink test Wells.

In reply I am to express His Honor's thanks to the Minister for this offer and to state that the North West Government will be happy to assume the management of these machines and that a sum to cover the cost of such management will be placed in the North West estimates for the ensuing year.

The Deputy
Minister of Interior
Ottawa.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your Obedient Servant,
R. B. GORDON.
Secretary to Lieut. Governor.

NORTH-WEST GOVERNMENT
WELL-BORING MACHINES

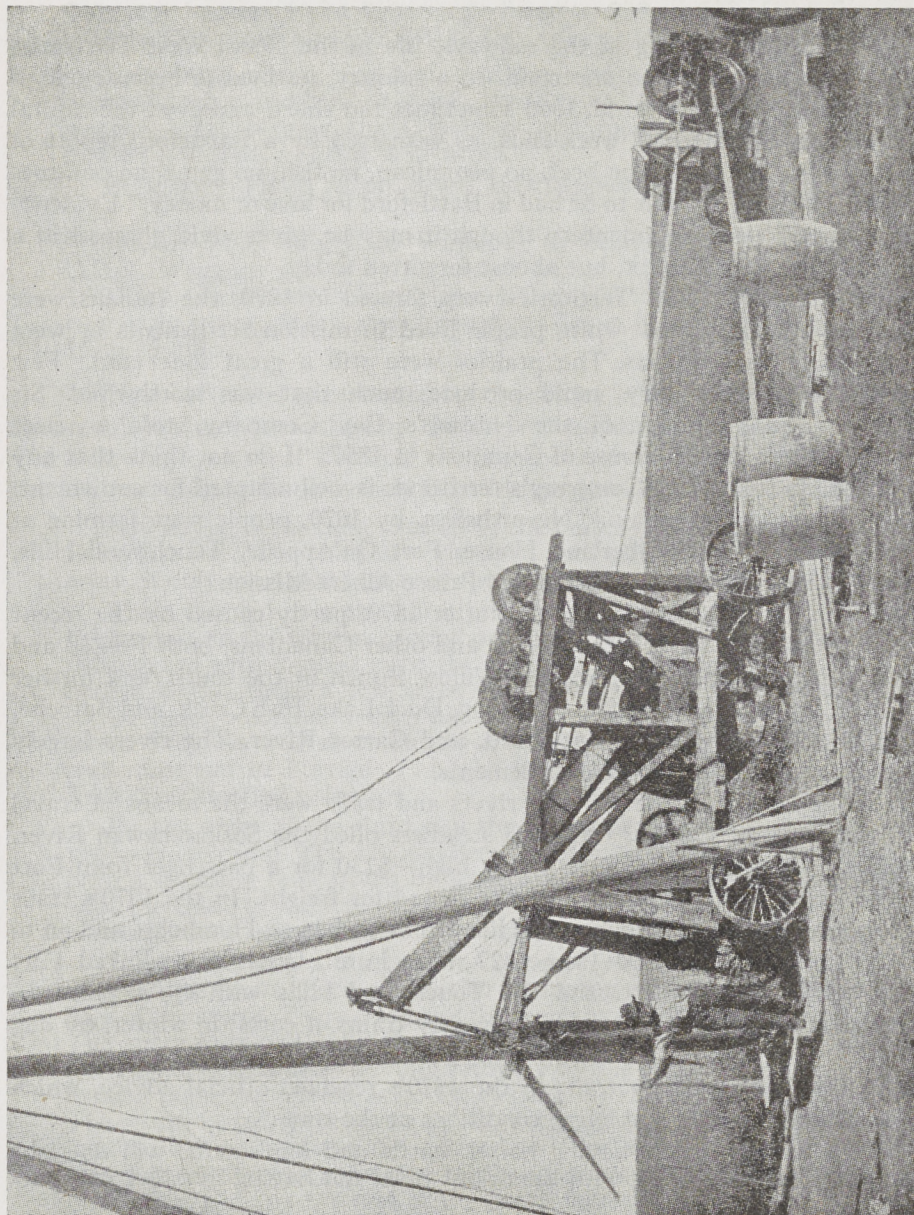
Rules and Regulations⁴

1. A Machine to be in a District for two months.
2. The person requiring the Machine, to furnish transportation to his own place.
3. The person, requiring the use of the machine, to furnish a team of horses to work same. Also board for the man in charge while engaged in the work; and to pay two dollars for a test-well, and fifty cents per day thereafter, if not satisfied with the first test, and further testing is required.
4. A test to consist in getting water or putting down a hole to a depth not exceeding 150 feet.
5. The man in charge to report to the Lieutenant-Governor each week, as per forms to be supplied, showing what has been done; and to forward at the same time all fees collected by him.
6. The Member for the District to have full charge of the machine while in his district, as to places where testing is to be carried on.
7. The Well-boring Machines to be numbered 1, 2, 3, or 4.

Lieutenant-Governor's Office,
Regina, 15th March, 1890.

R. B. GORDON,
Secretary.

4. Taken from *Report on Public Works in the North-West Territories . . . 1889-90* (Regina, 1890).



Government Well Drilling Machine at Carmel School North of Moose Jaw

Reproduced from *Report of the Department of Public Works of Saskatchewan, 1907-08*

TEACHERS' SECTION

Before The Railways¹

BEFORE THE coming of the railways, life in the North-West Territories was always hard, often uncertain. In a country destined to become one of the granaries of the world, food sometimes ran short, and even the capital "city" endured "austerity" week-ends, as witnessed by a Battleford report of May 19, 1879: "No bacon, no beef, no pemmican, no fish, no game, no potatoes and, until Monday, no flour to be had in Battleford for love or money." Evidence of pioneer conditions, fragmentary though it may be, gives vivid glimpses of a life familiar to every pioneer, but almost forgotten today.

When the North-West Territories were formed in 1870, the Indians were still nomadic, and the few white people lived in mission settlements or were grouped about trading posts. The prairies were still a great lone land. Few people believed that they could produce much that was worthwhile. Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, told a select committee of the British House of Commons in 1857: "I do not think that any part of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories is well adapted for settlement. The crops are very uncertain." Nevertheless, by 1870, people were farming at the following places: Cumberland House, Fort Qu'Appelle, Touchwood Hills, Fort a la Corne, Nepoween Mission and Prince Albert Mission.

An influx of new settlers appeared after 1870, partly caused by the recent troubles on the Red River. Half breeds and other Canadians, both French and English speaking, made their way to Willow Bunch in the south, and further north to St. Laurent, McDougall's Crossing, Duck Lake, Fish Creek, and Batoche, as well as to Prince Albert, Battleford, and Carrot River. The rivers largely determined the location of these settlements.

Until the advent of the railway, rivers and trails were the means of travel and transportation. Canoes, rafts and steamers plied the Saskatchewan River. Passenger and freight rates were pretty high—\$230 for a passenger from Fort Garry to Prince Albert and 14½ cents a pound for freight. In the 1870's trails ran from Fort Ellice to Touchwood Hills, from thence to Humboldt and on to Fort Carlton and Battleford—some 427 miles in all. Other trails linked Fort Carlton with Prince Albert, and the Touchwood Hills with Qu'Appelle. In summer, the mail and freight were carried by trains of carts; in winter, by dog sleds.

Settlers coming west by trails in the 1870's received official advice, which tells something of prices and living conditions at the time:

"Intending settlers having horses, cattle and implements will do right by bringing them along with them; but those not having livestock can pur-

1. It is proposed to offer in each issue of SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY an article for the special use of teachers, based directly on some item in the course for social studies prescribed by the Department of Education. The following article offers material on pioneer settlements suitable for use in the Grade IX course. The principal sources are two articles by Edmund H. Oliver, "The Beginnings of White Settlement in Northern Saskatchewan" and "Economic Conditions in Saskatchewan, 1870-1881" from *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1925, 1933; Dawson and Younge, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process*, Toronto, 1940, and A. S. MORTON and C. MARTIN: *History of Prairie Settlement and Dominion Lands Policy*, Toronto, 1938.

chase outfits at Winnipeg; or, if not caring to encumber themselves with farming implements, can purchase them at Battleford. The prices at Winnipeg are: double waggon, \$65 to \$75; Red River carts, \$10 to \$15; iron bound carts, \$30 to \$35; buckboards, \$50 to \$75; waggon harness, \$30 to \$40; cart harness \$6 to \$10; single harness, \$20 to \$30; Canadian teams, \$250 to \$400; native ponies, \$50 to \$80; yoke oxen, \$150 to \$175.

Camping outfit: A good tent, tin stove, frying pan, tin cups, axes, spades, hammer, brace and bits, or auger, drawing knife, saw, nails, assortment of waggon bolts, logging chain, hobbles and ropes for horses, a shot gun, powder and shot, as game is plentiful.

Provisions: Flour, bacon, beans, dried apples, sugar, tea, baking powder, etc.

Route: Take train from Winnipeg to Brandon, or to the end of the C.P.R. Waggon drawn by Canadian horses—the load should not exceed 1,500 lbs. Good oxen in carts, from 500 to 800 lbs. The best time to travel is in early spring. A fair average rate per day is for oxen 15 miles, for horses 15 to 25 miles.”

The rigors of travel experienced by the settler in reaching his new home via these trails is vividly described by Gerald Willoughby in *Retracing the Old Trail*.² The following quotation from his reminiscences gives an account of the rough journey over jolting roads by cart from Moose Jaw to Saskatoon in April, 1883:

“By daylight the camp was astir, the horses watered, fed and harnessed. Breakfast over, the tents were dropped and with bed-rolls securely packed away, it only remained to inspan the teams. The party was ready to trek . . .

Their way led over the hill north of the town. The men walking beside the teams and the women peering out from the canopy tops which sheltered them gazed with interest upon the evidences of settlement on every hand—here a shack, there a few acres of breaking, while upon occasion, some settler more beforehand than his neighbors might be seen already sowing grain. Progress was slow. Horses fresh from the east and unused to the trail must not be hurried . . . Night found them not more than five miles from their starting point . . .

By the night of the third day they were nearing White's Slough where they were to camp. The day had been comparatively warm, though overcast. Now a drizzling rain driven by a cold east wind made for discomfort. The wind increased in violence; the rain turned to sleet, the sleet to snow. Scarcity of wood made adequate fires impossible . . . It was a night of misery . . .

. . . By morning a blizzard was raging. Their camp was pitched on the open prairie where there was neither sheltering tree nor hillside to break the fury of the storm. There was little the teamsters could do for their horses . . . The spare men and older boys had their work cut out to keep the cattle from being driven away beyond recovery by the storm. The women huddled in their blankets striving as best they could to keep life in the little children. The storm lasted three torturing days. Small wonder that when at last the wind died down and the sun deigned to shine again some of the less hardy members of the party decided to abandon the enterprise and prepared to backtrack. Bidding the rest of the party farewell, they set out by the way they had come, and so faded out of the picture . . .

. . . On the morning of the fourth day when they resumed the march the horses showed the great good the rest had done them. The drooping spirits

2. GERALD WILLOUGHBY: *Retracing the Old Trail*, Saskatoon 1933. For an interesting account by John F. Clark (of Clark's Crossing) of a journey by steamer and trail to the Rocky Mountains, see JOHN HAWKES: *Saskatchewan and its People*, Chicago-Regina, 1924.

of the men and women had been revived, their determination to win through reborn . . . It was a glad day for these trail-worn adventurers when they sighted the Saskatchewan and pulled into camp upon her banks."

The early half-breed settlers did little farming and lived mostly by buffalo hunting in the summer and trading with or freighting for the Hudson's Bay Company in the winter. With the coming of the white settlers, small communities of farmers became established. By the Land Act of 1872, any man who was the head of a family or who had reached the age of twenty-one years could apply for a quarter section of land, and at the end of three years could obtain title, provided that he had cultivated a part of the land and had done some building. The fee was only \$10. The Willoughby memoir shows how pioneers got started:

"For the most part, each family brought along sufficient provisions to last them the first season. Flour, rice, beans, salt pork and other simple but important items made up the list. Immediately upon arrival the "breaking season" was upon them. From early morning until late evening the settler might be seen plodding behind a Prairie Queen plow which, in most cases, was drawn by a yoke of oxen. Oxen were used for the reason that they could "live off the land." To do the same work, horses must be fed grain; and there was no grain . . ."

Then came other work—replacing the tent with a sod shack or log house. This involved an important pioneer social institution, the "raising," in which neighbours co-operated to put up the house.

Early farming ventures seemed promising enough. Wheat and oats yielded well, and cabbages, cauliflowers, peas, and tomatoes provided a welcome variety in diet. It is interesting to note among agricultural experiments in this early period, summerfallowing, introduction of cultivated grasses, the fostering of "thoroughbred pigs and tame pigeons," and, a really startling innovation, a milking machine imported by Hugh Richardson of Battleford.

The most progressive settlement in the Territories was Prince Albert. It was founded in 1866 by the Reverend James Nisbet, a Presbyterian minister and a pioneer agriculturist in the north-central prairies. From 1866 to 1874 settlers arrived from Kildonan on the Red River, and others came from service with the Hudson's Bay Company. Each year brought newcomers and saw fresh buildings in the settlement or new farms and ranches in the district. By 1878 Prince Albert's population had reached 831. Besides two general stores, a blacksmith shop, a cooper and a number of carpenters, there was a school (established by Nisbet in 1867) and a restaurant, a steam lumber mill and a water power grist mill. There was the usual shortage of labour, especially of skilled labour. A letter written in 1880 said: "We very much want a watchmaker, shoe maker, tanner, soap factory, baker, butcher, tailor, painter, furrier; and a goodly number of common labourers could find constant employment."

It was pretty much the same in other settlements. Pioneer life was simple and hard. People's needs were fewer than they are now, and they were thrown more upon their own resources. Before the coming of the railway there was very little exchange of goods with the outside world, but these first settlers and farmers were laying the foundation of a worldwide agricultural economy.

Glasgow to Battleford¹

IN THE YEAR 1881 reports reached us in Glasgow, Scotland, where I lived, of the wonderful new country being opened up in Manitoba. These reports gave rise to many discussions regarding the opportunities offered there for young men in various branches of industry. At that time little mention was made of the vast undeveloped stretches of country west of Manitoba; attention was concentrated on that Province only. At the meetings of a coterie of young men held weekly in the premises of a tobacconist in Sauchiehall Street, called the "School," the subject was frequently discussed by us. Then, as now, it was contended that in Britain all lines of business were so fully developed by concerns commanding large resources that young men with limited capital had very little chance of succeeding in business.

* * *

At that time I was conducting a grocery business at Bridgeton Cross in the East end of Glasgow. The work was strenuous, from seven in the morning till eight at night during the week except Saturday (when it was twelve o'clock before closing up). The average purchase per customer running about eight cents, it can easily be imagined that there was drudgery connected with it.

One night in November after a heated controversy, I decided to go out to Manitoba and see for myself. I acquainted my parents with my decision. It took a little time to dispose of my business and wind up my affairs. In January 1882 I was ready to take my departure. About the middle of February I sailed on the Allan liner *Parisian*, then a new ship, from Liverpool.

* * *

On the night of the 16th of March we arrived in Winnipeg. In Winnipeg we had our first experience of riding in a sleigh. It was an omnibus body mounted on runners. The ride from the station to the hotel was a constant succession of jolts, the snow had been deep, was worn down into hollows, evidently following the ruts that had been left in the mud when the frost set in. To say that we enjoyed the ride was very wide of the mark; we simply "tholed" it as the Scottish expression is.

[Mr. Clinkskill spent the remainder of his first winter in Canada with friends near Emerson, Man. In the spring he joined a group of young men going west to take up homesteads west of Brandon. The section of Mr. Clinkskill's narrative dealing with these experiences has been deleted for the purposes of this article.]

My sojourn on the prairie convinced me that I was not cut out for farming operations. Being city bred, I was ignorant of the rudiments of agriculture and I decided it was no use to start learning. It would take too long before I could make any success of it. I determined to try some other way of making a living.

1.—This article is comprised of excerpts from the narrative of the late James Clinkskill recounting in his own words his experiences in Western Canada from his arrival in 1882 until 1912. The manuscript is in the University of Saskatchewan Library and in the Saskatoon Public Library. Mr. Clinkskill represented Battleford in the Territorial Legislative Assembly and later represented Saskatoon before the formation of the province of Saskatchewan. He was the last mayor of Saskatoon as a town and its first mayor as a city in 1906.—A.R.C.

I got acquainted with a young man from Ontario, who was considering to go into the store business. My ideas ran in that line too, so we agreed to combine our capital, and start a store. In looking around Winnipeg we found store rents in our estimation, so high that we could not afford to start there. There was a great deal of talk about Prince Albert on the North Saskatchewan, as a rising place with a good future before it. The railway was expected to be extended there in two years. We consulted with a number of business people who professed to know it, amongst others was the manager of the Commercial Bank to whom I had a letter of introduction. We decided to locate there. This banker told us of a store building in Prince Albert that could be rented cheaply. We hunted up the owner, Charles Mair, and signed a lease of it for a year.

The next proposition was how we were to get our goods transported. Prince Albert was a long way off. The Canadian Pacific Railway was running construction trains as far as Troy (now Qu'Appelle Station) and there was also a water route, from Selkirk by steamer to Grand Rapids on Lake Winnipeg, then Hudson's Bay Company steamer up the river to Prince Albert. Unfortunately we selected the latter route.

* * *

The steamer made Grand Rapids Sunday. We were chagrined on being told that owing to the low state of the river, the steamer could not get up further than Cumberland House, about half way to Prince Albert. What were we to do? There were two propositions to consider; either let the goods go forward, remain at Cumberland House all winter, or ship them back to Winnipeg, then forward by rail to Troy, then overland by cart to Prince Albert. Figuring the cost of shipping the goods back to Winnipeg, with rail freight to Troy and cartage by land, it was going to add such a large cost to the goods that we decided to let them go forward to Cumberland House, shipping back to Winnipeg only the perishable goods. After discharging the cargo, the *Princess* sailed, and after an uneventful passage arrived at Selkirk.

Having premises rented at Prince Albert we had to make some new purchases so as to have something to sell to make expenses in our store. We loaded a car with goods principally provisions, and shipped it to Troy. The road was under construction and as there was no agent at Troy, we had to prepay freight charges and follow car up closely. On arriving at Troy we guarded our car carefully, it being up to us to see that our goods were not stolen. Before shipping we had to sign release of responsibility. Goods were lying alongside the track that had been dumped out of the cars and left exposed to the weather. We engaged an Irishman, Mulholland by name, who had a lot of oxen and carts, to carry our goods to Prince Albert. The price we had to pay gave us a shock, four dollars a hundred pounds. He poor fellow, earned his pay, it was well on in November before he reached Prince Albert. The next problem was how were we to get to our destination ourselves. The stage carrying mail and passengers went only once in three weeks; it had just gone, and we did not care to wait for the next stage. We bought a little Indian pony and a buckboard, and packing our baggage on it along with a small tent and some provisions, we started off on the long trip. I was totally ignorant of how to handle a horse, not knowing even how to harness one, my partner had to hitch and drive our cayuse. As is usual with those

unaccustomed to pony travel we pushed our little beast too hard the first two days out, consequently it played out on us. Our progress was slow; we camped often giving the pony lots of time to eat and rest. Travelling through the beautiful Touchwood district, we came to the edge of the Salt Plain, and camped for the night. Starting early so as to get across this stretch of barren alkali before dark, we managed by sundown to reach a place where the stage stopped at, the only spring of fresh water on the plain. Next afternoon we reached the bluffs on the other side. We made a roaring fire that night. Eight days out we made the South Saskatchewan River, crossed on the ferry at Batoche, and on the twelfth day crawled into Prince Albert. It was a delightful journey from the crossing, passing through woods with nice open spaces and water in ponds all the way along. When a few miles from the town we asked how far it was to Prince Albert; the reply we got was that we had been travelling through Prince Albert for some miles back. The town is nicely situated on a level bench along the river, the land sloping up to quite a height on the south and north bank heavily wooded with Spruce timber. We liked the look of the town. Without difficulty we found the building we had rented, our hearts went into our boots when we saw it. The building was of frame, just a shell, unpainted, and a most disreputable looking place and located away from the centre of the business part. No use crying over spilt milk. We had leased it for a year, so had to do the best we could with it. The second floor was all in one room. We boarded off part of it with rough boards, pasted paper over the cracks, and fixed it for a living place. During the cold weather—and it was a cold winter that year (1882-83) going as low as 64 degrees below—when the fire in the stove went out the strips of paper would contract and break with a noise like a pistol shot. After a long time poor Mulholland arrived with our goods. He was a very dilapidated looking fellow; he had suffered from snow-blindness, and a veil of green netting was over his eyes, his face was black in spots from frost bites, and his fingers were badly frozen. We lost no time in opening out our goods for business. It was a dreary time, many days would pass without a customer. It was depressing. How we did regret our adventure. Our goods away down the river, nothing doing, the provisions we brought in overland soon sold out, and no way to get any more till Spring. We made one very fortunate sale toward the end of the winter. In our car we had brought a quantity of coal oil in tins. An outfit with sleighs from Battleford came in to get supplies, as everything was sold out there including coal oil. They offered us two dollars a gallon for what oil we had left, which offer we promptly accepted. Afterwards we learned this party encountered stormy weather going back and had to lighten their loads making a cache in a bluff. We heard afterwards that some one had come on this cache and carried off the coal oil.

During the winter my partner and I cooked our own food, "batching" is the expression. The worst part of the "cooking" was washing up the dishes. We got on to a scheme of using up all our crockery and utensils till all we possessed was dirty; then had a great general wash up. We were able to buy bread which was a comfort. The bread we cut in slices as it got so cold in our "house" that the loaf froze hard, it was impossible to cut it. Then we toasted the slices to thaw them out. In our ignorance we bought some cordwood that was green. It was a terrible job getting it to burn. It was my duty to saw this wood, then split it into fine pieces.

The starting of the fire in the morning was a delight. The cold numbed my fingers even with mitts on, this wet stuff simply refusing to take fire. Sometimes it was half an hour before the fire was going good.

Old residents told us that just as soon as the river was clear of ice, the steamer would start up the river. Day after day we watched for its arrival. At last one afternoon the 20th of May, we heard the whistle. Look and behold here it was at last. It was a strange looking craft to my eyes. About a hundred and fifty feet long by fifty feet wide, with large upper structure where the passenger cabins and dining room were, the paddle wheel at the stern. The freight was on deck, there being only a small hold, as the boat was flat bottomed and very shallow. We lost no time in presenting our Bills of Lading, and were informed that all freight and storage charges at Cumberland House during the nine months it was on the way, had to be paid before we got delivery of our goods. The freight charges we expected we had to pay, but the storage charge was an imposition; it was adding insult to injury. We paid it under protest and took delivery; afterwards we got this charge refunded. In the meantime we consulted a lawyer. He gave us an opinion of the law, but as he did not have his law books at hand, advised us not to act on his advice. Charge \$25 all the same.

Now we were confronted with the problem of what to do with our goods. Here we were with a large stock of goods bought for the winter trade, and this was the month of May. It was rumored that at Battleford, one hundred and fifty miles up the river, there was a shortage of supplies. This place was the capital of the North West at that time. A troop of the North West Mounted Police, the residences of the lieutenant governor and the stipendiary magistrate, who was the only judge in the country, were all located there. After debating the matter, I decided to go to Battleford on the steamer, taking a small assortment of goods with me and look over the situation.

I arrived at Battleford on the 25th of May. The only place I could find in which to put my goods was a log house on the flat on the Battle River below Government House. The house had been abandoned on account of a flood the spring before. The owner, Mr. P. G. Laurie, the owner of the *Saskatchewan Herald*, put it at my disposal. It was evident to me that there was an opening for us. I received great encouragement from many of the people to establish a permanent business there. I went back to Prince Albert on the steamer, packed up a larger assortment of goods, and on the next trip of the steamer up the river again went to Battleford. I took with me a large tent, this I erected on the flat, and opened out for business. For a few months business was good, and the prospect favorable of eventually getting a full share of the trade. It became necessary to arrange for a building as I could not continue in a tent when the cold weather arrived. There was a small log building unoccupied, near the foot of the hill coming in from the south, which had been used as a trading post. Hunting up the owner I purchased it. In September I made a trip to Prince Albert to get some flour, and talk over future movements with my partner. We decided to abandon Prince Albert and locate permanently in Battleford. In October, my partner sold the bulk of the stock in Prince Albert, packed up what was left, and came up the trail with the outfit.

Recent Canadian Histories¹

A. L. BURT, *A Short History of Canada for Americans*, Minneapolis and Toronto, 1942, second edition, 1944; illustrated.

D. G. CREIGHTON, *Dominion of the North: a History of Canada*, Boston, 1944.

EDGAR MCINNIS, *Canada: a Political and Social History*, New York and Toronto, 1947; illustrated.

A. R. M. LOWER, *Colony to Nation: a History of Canada*, Toronto, 1946.

CANADIAN HISTORY has acquired the quite undeserved reputation of being insufferably dull. Who or what is responsible for this it is difficult to say, but the history of this country seems to be regarded by most people as a wearisome chronicle of constitutional struggles, Acts of Parliament, and interminable debates by stuffy politicians, relieved only by the romance of the fur trade and the glamour of the Mounties. That the history of Canada is not dull is amply demonstrated by the four books here briefly reviewed. Drama and excitement, humor and pathos, fulfillment and frustration, conflict and concord, nobility and meanness, in short, all the ingredients which have entered into man's career in all times and places are present in the story of Canada. That story, whatever else it may be, is not uninteresting.

The appearance of four histories of Canada in the last five years suggests that there is a growing market for this type of literature. Publishers are, of necessity, businessmen first and patrons of learning second, and they can hardly be expected to undertake the publication of books in which they can see no reasonable expectation of financial profit. Three of these four books have now been on sale for some time and, although they may not have been best sellers, they appear to have enjoyed a considerable degree of popularity. There seems to be no reason why the same should not be true of the most recent one, that by Professor McInnis. In addition, the quality of these histories, besides being a tribute to the talent of their authors, testifies to the scope and value of Canadian historical research during the past generation. Lacking the detailed studies of many scholars, these general works probably could not have been written and, though there are undoubtedly large areas of this country's past which require further exploration, it is now apparently possible to achieve a fairly balanced synthesis.

Of the four histories Professor Burt's *A Short History of Canada for Americans* is, on the whole, the least satisfying. This is perhaps inevitable in view of the limitations of space within which he has worked. As its title indicates, his volume is addressed to an American audience which, it must be admitted, is almost completely and no doubt contentedly ignorant of Canadian History. It is only fair to say that Mr. Burt's object is a modest one—to provide a brief and general introduction to the subject for the uninitiated reader. But it may be asked whether in doing so he has not sacrificed the complex realities of Canada in his effort to achieve brevity and simplicity. Though it is clearly written and well

1. This review is confined to recent histories of Canada written in English and is therefore somewhat incomplete. Jean Bruchesi, *Histoire du Canada pour tous*, 2 vols., Montreal, 1939, should be placed beside the four books mentioned above.

organized, one puts the book down with the feeling that it does not quite capture the essential flavor of Canada's past and that the true character of this country does not emerge from its pages. Would not a deeper probing into the subject be more rewarding, especially for an American reader in search of an understanding of the Canadian story? Over-simplification, instead of making a subject more palatable to the layman, may produce the impression that the fare is, after all, rather tasteless.

There are a number of counts on which, one feels, Mr. Burt might be challenged. Suffice it to indicate one rather noticeable deficiency which suggests this quality of oversimplicity—the complete absence from the narrative of so many individuals well known and of some importance in Canadian history. Undoubtedly this was done deliberately to lessen the confusion of the novice reader but the story of the struggle for responsible government does seem incomplete without some reference to Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine. Such old faithfuls as Simcoe, Francis Bond Head, Sydenham, Bagot, Metcalfe, and Edmund Head are not here. Hincks, A. T. Galt, Tilley, Blake, Cartwright, Mowat, Mercier, Fielding, Sifton, and Haultain, to mention just a few, have no part in the drama. Canada's politicians have perhaps received too much attention in the writing of its history but the play appears a little skimpy with so many venerable old actors missing from the cast. However, to say these things is not to suggest that *A Short History of Canada for Americans* cannot be read with profit. Any book by an historian of Professor Burt's stature is well worth a serious reading and anyone approaching Canadian history for the first time will find in this one a useful introduction.

Dominion of the North is a more mature and full-bodied book. Professor Creighton's skilled pen makes the story of Canada vitally interesting. It delineates always ably and at times brilliantly the immense color and variety of Canada's past and has produced truly a remarkable integration in a relatively short space of the fundamental ingredients of this country's history. The book is infused with a warmth and vividness which seem to make the subject come alive and its readers should derive from it an understanding of the economic ambitions, the racial and religious cleavages, the sectional antipathies, and the impact on Canada of the world at large, which have together made the Dominion of today. But *Dominion of the North* is far from being merely a discussion of these impersonal historic forces. Rather, they are explained in terms of the men who have embodied them and given them expression; the book is inhabited throughout by flesh and blood human beings and this is one of its most attractive features.

It seems likely that Professor McInnis's *Canada: a Political and Social History* will become the standard text for courses in Canadian history at the university level. Mr. McInnis declares that "The history of Canada is a study in political survival" and his book represents "an attempt to present the narrative of Canada's evolution in terms that will illustrate its basic determinants." What he believes these determinants to be must be left to the reader to discover for himself and this book will amply repay a careful reading. Its author writes with authority and appropriate scholarly detachment. Although his literary style is less vivacious than Mr. Creighton's, it is lucid and effortless; from time to time it is enlivened with touches of sardonic humor as, for example, when speaking of the Jesuits'

efforts to evangelize the Indians, he remarks: "Their ethics had little meaning to a primitive and tribal civilization in which gluttony was a social obligation and polygamy an economic asset. Religion to the Indians was bound up with superstition and magic, and as magicians the missionaries were a disappointment." *Canada: a Political and Social History* is profusely illustrated with photographs, drawings, and cartoons which give added point and meaning to the text and an excellent bibliography is provided for the guidance of the interested student. Altogether, this is a welcome addition to Canadian historical literature.

The most distinctive, and at the same time, the most provocative and stimulating of these four histories of Canada is Professor Lower's *Colony to Nation*. It is in no sense an ordinary text book by a disinterested scholar remaining unobtrusively in the background. This is a highly personal book; it might be called an "unburdening" for its author has delivered himself of not only his large knowledge of the subject but of his intense individual convictions about Canada and its people. Not everyone will agree with the judgements and opinions which bristle on the pages of *Colony to Nation*; some may be offended by them. But none can deny that they provide food for honest thought. Professor Lower is an ardent Canadian nationalist and his major grievance seems to be that there are so few of his fellow-country-men of whom the same may be said. His book is a compelling analysis of what might be termed the "multiple schizophrenia" of Canada, of the various divisive factors which he believes have so far prevented the growth of a genuine Canadianism. Chief of these, of course, has been the existence of two antithetical ways of life within Canada, and the relationship of French and English-speaking Canadians is the main theme of this volume. Professor Lower is depressed by the fact that the two peoples have not yet found that spiritual communion which is the indispensable basis of an enduring nationalism. It can only be discovered, he concludes, in "the one great thing its two peoples have in common, this strange and difficult land itself, this maddening land . . ." "From the land, Canada, must come the soul of Canada." *Colony to Nation* is a most instructive book; it is also at times moving and exasperating. It should be read by every Canadian who seeks to know his country.

No one, least of all their authors, would claim that the last word has been said in these histories of Canada. Many who read them will disagree with some of the interpretations which they advance, and will feel that certain things have been unduly emphasized and others unduly neglected. That this should be so is not only inevitable but desirable. Differences of opinion of this kind should challenge discussion among Canadians, should stimulate new efforts in historical research, and, by thus adding to our knowledge of Canada, make possible a more complete and balanced writing of our history.

W. R. GRAHAM

HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS

The American Farmer and the "Last Best West"¹

ONE OF THE greatest land rushes in the history of North America occurred in the first two decades of the twentieth century when over a million Americans moved into the Canadian west, thus completing the series of sweeping curves back and forth across the international boundary, of land-hungry farmers looking for land. Europeans, Canadians, and Americans from the Middle West preferred the crescent of bluffs reaching from Manitoba to the Rockies, but men from the Dakotas, Montana and like areas pushed onto the treeless southern grasslands, the true plains that they knew so well. So quickly did they come, and so pervasive was their presence that the "American invasion" was a common subject for serious and humorous comment.

First among the motives for this migration was the cheap land which more than compensated for the change of flag. The Dakota farmer was harassed by various economic forces that he did not always understand, but when land which sold for \$50 an acre at home could be purchased for \$2 an acre just across the border he knew that a move was good business.

Beyond such simple and obvious calculations, however, were more subtle motives. In the new, empty country it would be easy to establish the sons on neighbouring farms, instead of seeing them slip away into the growing cities. Moreover, favorable agrarian legislation in the Prairie Provinces, such as municipal hail insurance laws, lenient land taxes, and co-operative marketing was an attraction. Generous concessions to religious communities and racial groups were another important factor in "American" migration. Hutterites, Mennonites, German Lutherans, and groups of Finns, Icelanders, Norwegians and Belgians reached Canada by way of the United States. Then, too, the news of cheap land made many an "American," especially if he bore a French name, remember that his people originally came from Canada.

And so they moved in, by rail, wagon train, ox cart, and prairie schooner. The older types of transportation were favoured by many as cheaper, and wagon trains came not only from the Dakotas and Montana, but from Missouri, Iowa and Kansas, along the old Missouri Renee trail through Fort Benton. By train they came up the Soo Line to Portal from St. Paul, Chicago, Kansas City and elsewhere. They came in their thousands, striking out ahead of the railroads and founding in faith settlements at the time quite uneconomic for grain production.

They were welcomed, not only by aggressive land agents whose business it was to welcome everybody, and who did much high pressure salesmanship, legitimate and otherwise, but by responsible Canadian authorities, and experienced Canadian farmers. They were by far the best settler material for this new and difficult country. English immigrants often came from urban areas "completely innocent of rural life," and certainly of prairie rural life. Continental Europeans, except

1. The following is a digest of an article with the above title by Paul F. Sharp of the University of Minnesota, published in *Agricultural History*, April 1947, pp. 65-75. The editors accept responsibility for giving publicity to the article, but not for the facts or ideas contained in it.

some of the Russians, knew nothing of the prairies, and they all presented a problem of adaptation. Canadians from Ontario and the Maritimes feared the prairies. Americans, however, for the most part with no serious barriers of language and culture to overcome, knew farming as their profession, and the prairies as their home. They could be transplanted with a minimum of shock. They brought in experience and technical knowledge of "dry farming," invaluable in this country so strange to farmers accustomed to well-wooded and well-watered areas. The sod house, the "dugout" for storing water, the flat furrow, and other typically "prairie" features came to the Canadian West by way of the United States.

They had yet another desirable quality in marked contrast to the poverty of the many who came almost empty-handed from distant lands. They brought in large quantities of capital in the form of horses, cattle, farm equipment, personal property and cash. The official estimate placed their wealth at \$1000 per capita; unofficial observers put it much higher. They were the aristocrats of the frontier, able to by-pass the long hard years of drudgery and debt which afflicted so many settlers.

To secure such desirable immigrants Canadian government officials, railway companies and land companies made large investments, financial and otherwise. The inevitable "educational programs" flooded the American West with "literature" and lecturers, with "magic lantern" slides, grain samples, and atlases. Agents were stimulated by bonuses on settlers secured of \$1 to \$3 a head, depending on age and sex. Exhibitions of Canadian crops at fairs and expositions were effective, and the reputation of Seager Wheeler, five times the world's champion grower of hard spring wheat, was most effective of all. American land and railway companies soon paid Canadians the compliment of resenting their efforts. Pictures of Canada as "a land of ice and snow, drought and disillusionment" where Americans were not wanted, and occasionally shot or hanged in token thereof, may be taken as a sincere tribute to the success of Canada's "educational" efforts on the American plains.

The tide of American immigration began to ebb in 1913 and the entrance of the United States into the First World War practically ended the movement. Many Canadians expected and hoped that it would be renewed with the return of peace. Plenty of land was still available and overexpanded railways and overburdened tax-payers were ready to welcome new and prosperous citizens. However, new citizens did not arrive, and the former ones had for some years been moving back. Some had only entered as transients either to speculate or to "mine" the land. Stories of over-successful Americans, who retired to California on their profits, became traditional, but probably represent only a minor aspect of the American exodus. Many went home in discouragement. The bountiful rainfall of the period 1904-1910 was followed by a succession of bad years; the high cost of agricultural supplies and the falling wheat prices culminating in 1913 added to the "depression," economic and mental. Many Americans left the prairies for the cities, for lands farther north, or for the United States.

This American migration had lasting effects on the Canadian West, although these were not so sweeping as many on both sides of the boundary expected. At

one time Americans were mourning the depletion of the Middle Western population while many Canadians viewed with alarm the "Americanization" of the Canadian West. The turn of the tide, explained above, dispelled such fears. It left behind a substantial American element, which proved not only an economic but a social asset. The newcomers found no serious difficulty in blending their social and political views with the institutions of their adopted country. While some annoyed their Canadian neighbors by their ultra-Americansim, others were able to pay apparently sincere tributes to the Canadian system. The enforcement of the law impressed them favourably, as one farmer explained: "We have as good laws in the United States as you have in Canada, but they are not administered in the same way. I observe all laws on your Statute Books are strictly put into force, as occasion requires, while in our country many laws are a dead letter."

At the same time Americans made a positive contribution to the political life of the country. Reared in the atmosphere of agrarian discontent, and quite unmoved by loyalty to Canada's traditional parties, they were largely responsible for western radicalism and third party movement. Western Canada is indebted to Americans, in part, at least, for the Ku Klux Klan, prohibition, woman suffrage, for many other radical "planks," and perhaps for the Progressive movement of the twenties. The agrarian revolt seems to be an inevitable feature of the North American agricultural frontier, and the roots of any one may lie both sides of the border. Americans reaching the "last best West" brought in more than money and machinery.

DUST GETS IN YOUR EYES, pp. 2-3

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Editorial Note:

The editorial committee will welcome comments on this issue and suggestions for the future. Articles and illustrations suitable for publication are desired, but contributors should consult the Editor before submitting material.

